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# Infectious Disease Lectures Illustrate Power of Collaboration

## Center for Homeland Defense and Security

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# Infectious Disease Lectures Illustrate Power of Collaboration

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Two alumni of the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security traveled to the Middle East this summer to present six lectures related to infectious diseases and homeland security.

Sharon I. Peyus, an alumnus of the Executive Leaders Program, and Robert C. Hutchinson, who earned a master's degree in 2010, presented six lectures at the Infectious Disease Border Issues Conference June 19-21 in Amman, Jordan, and at the Infectious Disease and Disaster Response Conference July 11-14 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

The lectures illustrate the emphasis on collaboration commonly fostered at CHDS.

"The collaborative concepts we studied at CHDS and the importance in taking a leadership role paralleled the many honest conversations we had with conference participants about the risks any country faces and our collective limitations," Peyus said.

Both work for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations. They said the conferences were developed to create a platform for military leaders and civilian authorities to share best practices and lessons learned in regards to emerging infectious diseases, border security and disaster response.

"Even though Sharon and I have a long history of working together on emergency preparedness and disaster response, these conferences really assisted us in expanding our international perspective, especially for infectious diseases," Hutchinson said. "Our CHDS education and experiences re-enforced the importance of international collaboration, coordination and cooperation and assisted us in developing our presentations."

The presentations in Jordan addressed various issues and challenges regarding border control policy and enforcement activities during a pandemic or other health-related threat to a nation or region, as well as the world. The conference, hosted by the Royal Medical Service, was attended by approximately 100 Jordanian public health, law enforcement, customs and other officials responsible for public health policy development, implementation and assessment.

A tabletop exercise was conducted over three days during the conference to permit attendees to work through issues in interdisciplinary groups and exchange thoughts and ideas regarding infectious disease and border issues.

Peyus and Hutchinson's presentations in the United Arab Emirates focused on disaster management, contingency planning and lessons learned for officials from United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The conference was hosted by the Royal Medical Corps at the impressive Armed Forces Officers Club and Hotel.

The regional delegates and attendees included several surgeons general as well as numerous military general and flag officers and public health physicians. A presentation from each nation permitted the attendees to better understand their neighbor's current priorities and challenges.

On the last day of the conference, a tabletop exercise was conducted that focused on the capabilities of the nations to prepare for, respond to and recover from a significant pandemic influenza outbreak. The exercise permitted the participants to identify areas for improvement and contemplate their accurate capabilities to support their regional neighbors during a significant public health threat. At the end of the conference, the participants began planning the agenda and presentations for a follow-on conference for this important region of the world.

Both of the conferences provided the opportunity for collaboration on many levels, the pair said. On the micro-level, the conferences enabled two CHDS alumni the opportunity to work together to share their knowledge and experience to assist the participants in expanding and enhancing their preparedness planning for pandemic threats in the future. On a macro-level, decision-makers from several Middle Eastern countries were able to obtain and share information that shall likely improve their planning, response and recovery efforts and capabilities, especially with a focus on international cooperation and coordination.

The conferences were sponsored by the Department of Defense, United States Central Command in conjunction with the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center and Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine.

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